

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BONN 19673 01 OF 03 221650Z

44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

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AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BONN 19673

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF CSU DECISION TO FORM
SEPARATE BUNDESTAG FRAKTION

BEGIN SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLE
SPECULATION ABOUT A MOVE ON THE PART OF FRANZ JOSEF
STRAUSS TO FORM A NATIONAL CSU, THE DECISION OF THE CSU
BUNDESTAG DEPUTIES ON NOVEMBER 19 TO FORM A SEPARATE
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PAGE 02 BONN 19673 01 OF 03 221650Z

FRAKTION IN THE 8TH BUNDESTAG CAME AS A SURPRISE TO

EVERYONE, INCLUDING CDU CHAIRMAN HELMUT KOHL. IN THE SHORT RUN, THE SPLITTING OF THE UNION PARTIES' OPPOSITION IN THE BUNDESTAG (THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1949), IS A BOON TO THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION. LONGER-RANGE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CSU DECISION ARE SOMEWHAT MORE COMPLEX AND LESS PREDICTABLE. FDP POLITICIANS ARE CONCERNED THAT A CDU INDEPENDENT OF FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS: A) MIGHT ATTRACT VOTERS WHO PREVIOUSLY VOTED FOR THE FDP AND, B) COULD CONCEIVABLY BECOME A POTENTIAL COALITION PARTNER FOR THE SPD, THUS REMOVING THE SMALL LIBERAL PARTY'S PRIVILEGED POSITION AS A BALANCING FORCE IN WEST GERMAN POLITICS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE SPD REALIZES THAT, OVER THE LONG TERM, CSU/FDP COALITIONS ARE MORE LIKELY NOW THAT STRAUSS NO LONGER EXERCISES A VETO POWER ON THE ACTIONS OF THE CDU. IN SUM, THE CSU DECISION TO FORM A SEPARATE BUNDESTAG FRAKTION IS LIKELY TO BRING ABOUT LONG-TERM CHANGES WITHIN THE FRG POLITICAL CONSTELLATION. END SUMMARY.

1. THE VOTE FRIDAY AFTERNOON BY THE CSU BUNDESTAG DEPUTIES MEETING IN WILDBAD KREUTH, BAVARIA CAME AS A COMPLETE SURPRISE TO MOST POLITICIANS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. STRAUSS HAS, OF COURSE, THREATENED IN THE PAST TO FORM A NATIONWIDE CSU AND HIS STATEMENTS IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER 3 ELECTION DEMONSTRATED HIS FRUSTRATION AND RAGE WITH THE CDU. THEN, KOHL JOURNEYED TO BONN TO OBTAIN STRAUSS' PLEDGE THAT A JOINT FRAKTION WOULD BE FORMED BEFORE THE CSU CHAIRMAN ANNOUNCED HIS DECISION TO LEAVE MAINZ AND COME TO BONN TO HEAD THE JOINT FRAKTION. WHILE KOHL DID NOT RECEIVE THE WRITTEN PLEDGE HE SOUGHT FROM STRAUSS, HE WAS REASSURED ENOUGH TO MAKE THE MOVE. A JOINT CSU/CDU COMMISSION WAS SET UP AND MET LAST WEEK TO WORK OUT THE GROUND RULES FOR A JOINT UNION FRAKTION IN THE 8TH BUNDESTAG.

2. THE FIRST WIRE SERVICE REPORTS OF THE CSU DECISION SENT SHOCK WAVES THROUGH THE FDP NATIONAL PARTEITAG IN FRANKFURT. REPORTERS LEFT THE PARTEITAG AND RUSHED BACK TO BONN, AND THE CDU PRESS SPOKESMAN WHO ATTENDED CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BONN 19673 01 OF 03 221650Z

THE CONFERENCE AS AN OBSERVER DISAPPEARED FROM SIGHT WHEN THE NEWS BROKE. THE FDP DELEGATES WERE MORE CONCERNED WITH THE UNION PARTIES' SPLIT THAN WITH THEIR OWN PARTEITAG. ALTHOUGH THE FIRST REACTION AMONG MANY FDP DELEGATES WAS ONE OF JOY BECAUSE OF THE OBVIOUS SHORT-TERM ADVANTAGES FOR THE COALITION, THE LONGER-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THE CSU MOVE GIVE MANY OF THEM REASON FOR PAUSE.

3. HELMUT KOHL'S FIRST REACTION WAS ONE OF SHOCK
AND ANGER BECAUSE HE FELT THAT STRAUSS, WHO HAD NOT
DISCUSSED THE MOVE BEFOREHAND, HAD BEEN LESS THAN HONEST
WITH HIM. KOHL FOUND THIS PARTICULARLY FRUSTRATING
BECAUSE HE AND HIS ADVISORS FELT THAT HE AS CDU/CSU
CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE HAD BEEN MORE THAN GENEROUS IN
ACCEPTING STRAUSS' VIEWS IN MAKING UNION POLICY
DECISIONS. OBVIOUSLY, IT IS A SETBACK FOR KOHL TO COME
TO BONN TO BE ONLY ONE OF TWO OPPOSITION LEADERS.
HOWEVER, EVEN THOUGH BERNHARD VOGEL OFFERED TO STEP
DOWN AS KOHL'S SUCCESSOR IN THE RHINELAND-PALATINATE,

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PAGE 01 BONN 19673 02 OF 03 221645Z

44

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 BONN 19673

KOHL HESITATED ONLY A MOMENT BEFORE REPLYING THAT NOW MORE THAN EVER IT WAS NECESSARY TO GO TO BONN AND LEAD THE CDU FORCES IN THE BUNDESTAG.

4. AFTER THE INITIAL SHOCK, KOHL, BIEDENKOPF AND OTHERS BEGAN TO SEE A SOMEWHAT BRIGHTER LINING IN THE STORM CLOUDS FROM BAVARIA. IN THE SHORT RUN, THEY REALIZED KOHL WOULD HAVE A MORALE PROBLEM IN THE CDU FOR THERE WOULD BE A DEGREE OF UNCERTAINTY AND INSECURITY AMONG
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PAGE 02 BONN 19673 02 OF 03 221645Z

THE PARTY RANK AND FILE IN THE WAKE OF THE CSU DEFECTION. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, KOHL AND BIEDENKOPF SEE THE NEW SITUATION AS RELIEVING THE ONEROUS POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDEN OF BOWING TO STRAUSS' VIEWS AND, REGENERATED, THE CDU COULD HAVE A BRIGHT FUTURE.

5. THE SPD'S PUBLIC REACTION TO THE CSU DECISION WAS CAUTIOUS. HERBERT WEHNER, INTERVIEWED ON TV, WAS EVEN MORE IMPENETRABLE THAN EVER AND HINTED AT A NEW "WEIMER" SITUATION (I.E., A BUNDESTAG WITH MANY SMALL AND INEFFECTUAL PARTIES). IN THE SHORT RUN, THE CSU DECISION IS A BOON TO THE SPD. THE PARTY WILL HOLD ON TO THE BUNDESTAG PRESIDENCY AND DISSENSION WITHIN THE OPPOSITION IS BOUND TO STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT'S HAND. IT WILL ALSO IMPROVE SCHMIDT'S POSITION IN THE COALITION NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE FDP, BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE LONG-TERM NEGATIVE EFFECTS THE WILDBAD KREUTH DECISION COULD HAVE ON THE FDP. IN THE LONGER RUN, THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SPD ARE ALSO MORE COMPLEX AND POSSIBLY NEGATIVE.

6. IF HELMUT KOHL RISES TO THE CHALLENGE AND PROVIDES STRONG LEADERSHIP FOR THE CDU, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY CAN, OVER TIME, IMPROVE ITS VOTE-GETTING ABILITY. A SOMEWHAT MORE LIBERAL CDU COULD ATTRACT VOTERS AWAY FROM THE FDP, AND PERHAPS EVEN THE SPD. THE POSSIBILITY OF A FUTURE CDU COALITION WITH THE FDP ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL WOULD ALSO IMPROVE, SHOULD THE CENTER OF GRAVITY IN THE CDU MOVE SOMEWHAT TO THE LEFT WITH THE CSU'S DEPARTURE.

7. FDP NATIONAL TREASURER KARRY TOLD OUR CONGEN IN

FRANKFURT AND AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT HE SAW THE CSU
MOVE AS A VERY DANGEROUS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FDP. FIRST
OF ALL, HE SAID, THE CSU DECISION WOULD STRENGTHEN
SCHMIDT'S HAND IN THE COALITION NEGOTIATIONS. MORE
IMPORTANTLY, KARRY SAID, THE FDP WILL LOSE ITS ROLE AS
THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE AS A COALITION PARTNER FOR THE SPD.
A MORE LIBERAL CDU (AND KARRY SAW THIS AS A FOREGONE
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PAGE 03 BONN 19673 02 OF 03 221645Z

CONCLUSION) COULD BE A COALITION PARTNER FOR THE SPD.
THIS RAISES THE INTERESTING QUESTION AS TO WHETHER
THERE IS ROOM FOR FOUR MEANINGFUL POLITICAL PARTIES IN
GERMANY OR IF THE FDP WILL BE SWALLOWED UP IN THE LONG
RUN BY A MORE LIBERAL CDU ON THE LEFT AND A CONSERVATIVE
CSU ON THE RIGHT.

8. CDU SECRETARY-GENERAL BIEDENKOPF AT SATURDAY'S
EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE CDU LEADERSHIP ARGUED THAT THE
CDU SHOULD MOVE QUICKLY IN SETTING UP A CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN BAVARIA. THE CDU WOULD HOPE TO
PICK UP AS MUCH AS 15 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN THE 1978
LAND ELECTION AND THUS PREVENT STRAUSS FROM OBTAINING
AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. THOSE IN FAVOR OF THIS MOVE

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PAGE 01 BONN 19673 03 OF 03 221549Z

44

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 AMEMBASSY BONN 19673

REALIZE STRAUSS MIGHT REACT AND FORM A NATIONWIDE CSU,
BUT THEY ASSUME HE WILL DO THIS EVENTUALLY IN ANY CASE.
KOHL'S STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS FOLLOWING SATURDAY'S
MEETING LEFT THIS OPTION OPEN AND ON NOVEMBER 22 THE
CDU EXECUTIVE BOARD VOTED TO MAKE CONTINGENCY PLANS.

9. THE CSU DECISION IN THE BAVARIAN HEALTH SPA COULD
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PAGE 02 BONN 19673 03 OF 03 221549Z

BE A TURNING POINT IN GERMAN POLITICAL HISTORY. WHILE
THE SHORT-RUN CONSEQUENCES ARE BOUND TO MAKE POLITICAL
LIFE IN BONN MORE INTERESTING IN THE MONTHS AHEAD, THE
LONGER-RUN IMPLICATIONS COULD LEAD TO NEW POLITICAL
CONSTELLATIONS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. IT IS TOO
EARLY TO KNOW WHAT FORMS THESE CONSTELLATIONS WILL
EVENTUALLY TAKE. KOHL WILL BE TESTED IN THE MONTHS
AHEAD AND, IF HE PROVES WANTING, HIS RIVALS IN THE CDU
ARE PREPARED TO MOVE IN QUICKLY TO TAKE OVER. THE
INTERNAL BALANCE BETWEEN THE RIGHT AND LEFT WITHIN THE
CDU IS LIKELY TO BE ALTERED, BUT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE
TO UNDERESTIMATE THE STRENGTH OF THE CONSERVATIVES
WITHIN THE CDU, ESPECIALLY IN THE BUNDESTAG FRAKTION.
FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS ONCE AGAIN HAS PROVED
TO BE ONE OF THE MOST UNPREDICTABLE MAJOR POLITICIANS
IN POST-WAR WEST GERMANY.
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